of this report issued.

Public Legal Education and Information Service of New Brunswick

Annual Report 2002-2003

Helping New Brunswickers Know the Law!

Director's Report

I am pleased to report that Public Legal Education & Information Service of New Brunswick has successfully completed another busy and productive year. Our well established core activities saw increases in demand and usage this year, and we were fortunate to once again be able to participate in some new and exciting projects.

Our core activities include the distribution of over 100 bilingual publications about the law, and this past year we were happy to be able to share over 136,000 such products with the people of New Brunswick. Our website (www.legal-info-legale.nb.ca) has been steadily attracting new users, and we were also pleased to be able to upgrade that website to include new products and to accommodate new technology. In addition, this past year saw PLEIS-NB participate in the delivery of legal information workshops to community groups such as Planned Parenthood, Chimo Helpline, and the Multicultural Association of Fredericton.

Our project work has taken PLEIS-NB in some interesting new directions in recent months. We are proud to be working collaboratively on an information kit for employers on family violence and the workplace with the Workplace Family Violence Committee. We also continued to work on the Youth Justice Renewal Initiative, a project that has become even more challenging now that the *Youth Criminal Justice Act* is in force. PLEIS-NB also undertook a provincial evaluation of our "Let's Stop Bullies" materials which provided some excellent input on how future editions of those materials can be improved.

Also this past year, PLEIS-NB initiated some changes to the Family Law Line, which is also the nexus of the registration process for the "For the Sake of The Children" program. This free, parenting after separation program has been very successful across the province. In response to the need to make the line more accessible to working parents, we now have evening hours of operation two nights a week, a change that has been favourably received by the public.

These activities are mere highlights of what has been happening in our offices over the past year. But even so, it is easy to see that PLEIS-NB is fortunate to have a strong team of dedicated and talented individuals who work very hard to meet the needs of the general public. Without their motivation and skills, much of this work would not be possible. And it would be most appropriate to also acknowledge the efforts of our volunteers who include legal professionals, law students, and community leaders whose hard work also contributes to PLEIS-NB's success.

PLEIS-NB is now preparing for another busy year that will also bring changes to our office. This fall we will welcome back Dr. Deborah Doherty as our Executive Director, and we look forward to having her back on our team. Dr. Doherty has been a vital part of PLEIS-NB's growth over the years, and her energy and expertise will be of tremendous value in our future work.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the staff and Board of Directors of PLEIS-NB for their support and hard work during my time as Acting Executive Director. I feel very fortunate to have worked with so many knowledgeable and skilled people over the past year, and I am very grateful for the experience that this opportunity has given me. I wish continued success and good health for all of PLEIS-NB's partners and supporters, and for many more years of sharing legal information with New Brunswick for PLEIS-NB.

Sincerely,
Teena R. Thorne
Acting Executive Director

PLEIS-NB's Mandate

PLEIS-NB is a non-profit organization and a registered charity. Our mandate is to develop bilingual educational products and services about the law for the general public in order to promote access to the legal system. The goal is to assist the public in identifying and understanding their legal rights and responsibilities with a view to improving their ability to deal with legal matters.

The following four objectives were developed by PLEIS-NB to help us meet these goals and to facilitate the establishment of priorities:

(i) Respond to community needs and requests for legal information;

(ii) Increase the availability of easily understood general information about the law, as well as law-related information on specific topics;

(iii) Promote a greater understanding of how the law affects everyday activities and to facilitate self-help skills; and,

(iv) act as a clearinghouse for information about the law by promoting awareness of and access to legal resources in the community, while encouraging the coordination of public legal education initiatives.

Board of Directors in 2002-2003

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Full and Part Time Staff 2002 - 2003

Deborah Doherty, Ph.D.
Executive Director
(on leave, October 2001)

Lindsay M. Manuel, LL.B.
Youth Justice Project Coordinator

Lan Ma
Administrative Assistant

Rose Haché & Natalie Hickey
Administrative Support *(in-kind support)*

Teena R. Thorne, LL.B.
Acting Executive Director
(October2001)

Jill Fraser
Family Law Toll Free Line

Kelly McLaughlin & Melissa Melanson
Summer Law Students

Volunteers and Partners

The people behind PLEIS-NB are not limited to the members of the board and staff. PLEIS-NB enjoys a strong volunteer base and recognizes the contributions of our partners and volunteers on numerous projects.

We are very grateful to the members of the bar who volunteered their time and expertise over the past year. These individuals contribute directly to the success of PLEIS-NB by assisting in the development of publications, giving presentations to community groups and providing insight into our work. Lawyers and professionals also assisted us with the use of proper French terminology.

We were pleased to participate in the Pro-Bono Students Program again this year, training 5 law students from both the University of New Brunswick and l'Université de Moncton to assist us in our programming and services. Our volunteer law students worked on the Youth Justice day camps, the postcard contest as well as many day-to-day projects.

Many individuals contributed to PLEIS-NB through their participation on projects and advisory committees. We would like to acknowledge:

- Muriel McQueen Fergusson Foundation;
- Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Research on Family Violence;
- Faculty of Law, University of New Brunswick;
- Faculté de droit, Université de Moncton;
- Military Family Resource Centre, CFB Gagetown;

And the many other community and government agencies who worked with us in the past year.

Although we cannot mention everyone by name we would like to extend our gratitude and recognize the valuable contribution of those who volunteered their time in the advancement of PLEIS objectives.

Activities and Projects

2002-03 proved to be a busy year for Public Legal Education & Information Service of New Brunswick. Some highlights of our work this past year are included below.

"Let's Stop Bullies!"
This past year PLEIS-NB conducted a province-wide evaluation of the bully materials with parents, service providers, and children. These products are very popular in New Brunswick, and we receive many requests from outside our province as well. One goal of the evaluation was to assess the effectiveness of the products and to gather information on how it might be improved. The evaluation took several months to complete, but the end report was encouraging. These materials are being used in homes, schools, and in children's programs around the province.

Some of the suggested changes are outside of the scope of the project such as the recommendation that the activity book be made full colour. This is not practical for a tool that we know is being photocopied for use in group activities, and the cost of such a booklet would be very inhibitive for a non-profit such as PLEIS-NB. Other recommendations however were very useful, and included suggestions such as moving the story from a schoolyard to a neighbourhood setting, as well as incorporating a different activity on the back cover. We look forward to working through the evaluation report and implementing some of those ideas in future revisions of these materials.

Website Update
The usage of PLEIS-NB's website has been steadily increasing since it first went on-line years ago. In a society where technology is easy to use and very accessible, the maintenance of our website becomes increasingly important in the delivery of public legal information. Given our large number of publications, the contents of our site is very text heavy, although there are sections that are interactive and easy to use. In responding to demands that the website be simplified and easier to search, PLEIS-NB undertook to work with consultants to redesign the internal workings of the site so that the information is easier to find and the text more user-friendly. The result is a new and improved website with several new publications added, an easier to navigate format, and the capacity to make changes to the site in-house.

Youth Justice
With the coming into force of the new *Youth Criminal Justice Act*, the push is on to ensure that New Brunswick youth, their parents and care givers, educators, and other professionals working with young people understand their roles in a new youth justice system. PLEIS-NB continued to deliver presentations at conferences, workshops, professional development seminars, and in classrooms about the new legislation and the Youth Justice Renewal Strategy. In addition, we sponsored a postcard contest for middle schools students, developed a new poster, and completed work on a computerized game based on the *YCJA* for national distribution called "Boomer's Law Challenge".

New Brunswick Family Violence and Workplace Kit
In collaboration with the Workplace Family Violence Committee, PLEIS-NB has been working on a toolkit for employers that includes information on how family violence can impact the workplace and ways that employers can minimize that impact. The Committee is made up of government, non-profit, private sector, and academic representatives. This provincial project is quite wide in scope, and we hope to continue working on future products in this area.

Family Law Line
The bilingual Family Law line continues to receive numerous requests for information on topics such as child support, divorce, custody and access and other family related topics. The Line also serves as the gateway to the For the Sake of the Children parenting after separation program that is offered by the New Brunswick Department of Justice. As with other PLEIS-NB activities, the demands for information remain high. To accommodate working parents, the hours of operation for the Line were changed this year to allow for evening accessibility two nights a week.

Investor Education
PLEIS-NB continued to work with the Securities Administration Branch of the Department of Justice to deliver information sessions to seniors about the fraud prevention. These seminars are wonderful examples of how agencies such as PLEIS-NB can partner with communities in bringing education to the public. For each community presentation, a local lawyer and a local police officer are encouraged to participate and actually deliver the presentations on Wills and Estates Planning, and Journey Through the Financial Jungle. Also, local seniors groups are encouraged to help organize and promote the event in their community.

This past year four Investor Education seminars were held in Miramichi, Campbellton, Woodstock and Caraquet with over 350 seniors participating at these events. We look forward to bringing these sessions to other regions of New Brunswick next year.

Overview of Information Services

In the past year, PLEIS-NB saw an increase in distribution of publications, an increase in questions responded to by the organization and an increase in the use of the PLEIS-NB website. In 2002-2003, PLEIS-NB distributed 136,483 publications—over 10,000 more than last year. PLEIS-NB also saw the number of legal information questions almost double.

The telephone continues to be the most common method of requesting information, although the public is beginning to rely less on the telephone and fax machine to reach us and instead opting to use email or to request information in person.

PLEIS-NB receives requests for information from individuals as well as government agencies, libraries, non-profit organizations, the police and others. Although individuals make the greatest number of requests, individuals request relatively small amounts of publications. The greatest number of publications are requested by NB Department of Justice, the RCMP/Police, Service New Brunswick, family violence centres, legal organizations (including law firms, the Law Society and the Law Foundation) and NB Department of Family and Community Services.

PLEIS-NB's proactive distribution changed dramatically with the increased awareness of our "Let's Stop Bullies" activity books, parents' guides and bookmarks. Outside organizations such as public libraries, schools and the RCMP distributed thousands of bully materials. Outside agencies also continued to distribute our other materials as well.

The high demand for the "Lets' Stop Bullies" materials also had a significant impact on the requests for publications by area of law. The amount of publications in the area of violence in schools as a percentage of the total number of publications distributed almost doubled, due to the considerable increase in the distribution of "Let's Stop Bullies" activity books, parents' guides and bookmarks.

Publications in the area of planning for the future also saw a significant rise, accounting fo. 10.67% of the total number of publications distributed, as compared to 4.38% in the previous year. Family law and family violence publications continue to be in high demand, although when compared to the previous year, they make up a smaller proportion of the total demand. The demand for family law and family violence publications was fairly consistent with the demand from the previous year, with the numbers decreasing slightly. The greatest number of questions continue to be family law questions.

PLEIS-NB serves a varied public. Although the majority of the requests are made in English, over 10% are in French. Also, compared to the previous year, the proportion of questions asked in French increased. The gender split continues to be unequal, with an even greater proportion of women requesting information than the previous year. Women continue to request more information than men, particularly on the topic of divorce, accounting for over 90% of the requests, and in the area of family law where women request information almost four times as much as men.

The PLEIS-NB website continues to be a valuable source of legal information for the public. There was an average of about 380 hits to the website daily this year, as compared to the previous year, which yielded an average of 240 hits to the website daily. Also, the number of hits to the website is rising, continuing the trend of the previous year.